

Date: May 4, 1983

Place: Foster-Jourdan Center

Interview with: Mrs. Juanita Jones

Interview by: G. Maddox

Comments: Mrs. Jones was extremely helpful. After I asked her if I could speak with her, she returned from her home after checking with her husband who was not feeling well.

Q. I understand that your mother was the first black police woman in Evanston.

A. Yes. Mrs. Anna Beck was the first black police matron, as they called it then, from 1920 to 1934.

Q. What kind of work did she do?

A. She worked with women prisoners. She searched them because the men couldn't do that.

Q. Were there any problems at her job because she was black?

A. No, they worked together well, but they used to call my mother if they needed anyone searched in the middle of the night.

Q. About how many black police officers were there?

A. There was one woman out of five or six.

Q. When did your mother come to Evanston?

A. She came from Palmyra, ~~BM~~ ^{Mo} ~~cor~~ ⁱⁿ 1900.

Q. What did she do before she became a police officer?

A. She did house work.

Q. How did she get her police job?

A. She was recommended for it.

Q. Could you tell me about your family?

A. My mother had three children. I was born in north Evanston. I went to Linclnwood and ETHS. I graduated from Howard University.

Q. What did you do then?

A. I was a government worker. I worked as a county clerk for Cook County.

Q. And your brother?

A. One of my brothers was born in 1904. He was the second black alderman from 1947 to 1969. He was the senior alderman when he passed on. They are going to name a park after him this year. He went to Northwestern and played the clarinet, but he had to drop out when he got married.

Q. Do you know when Northwestern was integrated?

A. In the early twentieth century. He worked for the county commissioner's office before he was elected.

Q. I know your husband's not feeling well. Can you tell me something about him?

A. My husband was a policeman from 1942 to 1962. He came here from Troy, South Carolina.

Q. When did he come here?

A. He went to school here and to college at Morris Brown in Atlanta.

Q. What did he do before he became a police officer?

A. He owned a gas station.

Q. Why did he become a police officer?

A. Well it was World War Two and he didn't want to go into the army.

Q. Were there a lot of black businesses before the war?

A. Yes. We had all sorts of businesses. There were doctors, dentists, stores and even a hospital.

Q. Did these businesses serve anyone?

A. Anyone who had the money.

Q. Did the white businesses serve anyone?

A. Mostly, but there were some things. In 1929, they didn't want blacks to attend the high school prom. They told us that we could have our own. They couldn't hold it in the place they wanted if they let us in. We had a fight about that. My brother had gone to his prom, but they didn't reintegrate until the 1950's. We didn't need them to have a good time, anyway.

But some restaurants wouldn't serve Blacks, and if we wanted to go to the theatre we had to sit up in the Roost.

Q. What kind of social clubs did you belong to?

A. We were all church goers. Most of us here go to Ebenezer. My mother went there. Everybody knew my mother. If people didn't have any money they could call her up. She would call Mr. Bryant at his store and charge a basket of food for them. They would get all kinds of things, chickens, bread, everything. When her check would come in, most of it would go to Mr. Bryant. She kept doing it until she got sick. She used to take in children. She took fifteen or twenty in over the years.

Q. Who would she take in?

A. She would take in children who had lost a parent. Anyone who needed it. She raised the last two. The Illinois Children's Aid society asked her to raise them. She used to go to the station, the police station, and bring people home for the night. If you didn't have a place to stay they could lock you up for the night. She would bring home people who didn't belong there. She would bring ladies or even white people home and kick us out of our beds for them.

Q. Your mother must have been an amazing woman.

A. She was. When I called my niece to tell her they were naming a park after her father, she said they should name it after my grandmother. But all the families around here were very close. They all used to look after anyone's children, not like it is today. If you saw a child being bad, you could get on to him, and his parents would back you up.

Q. Thank you.

A. Oh, I wanted to tell you about my other brother. He was an athlete. He went to Wilberforce college on a scholarship. He moved to Washington, and worked for the government there.

